WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.   A method for organizing vendor information comprising:

5   receiving data comprising a plurality of accounts payable items, each accounts payable item having an associated vendor name, the vendor name representing a business associated with a purchase transaction represented by the accounts payable item, wherein ones of the accounts payable items are associated with a first
10   vendor name; and

associating a first vendor identifier and a second vendor identifier using a computer with ones of the accounts payable items associated with the first vendor name.

15

2.   The method for organizing vendor information according to Claim 1, wherein the first vendor identifier uniquely identifiers a single vendor associated with the first vendor name.

20

3.   The method for organizing vendor information according to Claim 1, wherein the second vendor identifier indicates a relationship between a vendor and the vendor with the first vendor name.

25

4.   The method for organizing vendor information according to Claim 3, wherein the relationship is any of a subsidiary relationship, a joint venture relationship, a partnership relationship or an ownership relationship.

30

5.   The method for organizing vendor information according to Claim 1, wherein the first vendor identifier and second vendor identifier are associated with ones of the items in response to the first vendor name.

6. The method for organizing vendor information according to Claim 5 further comprising maintaining a database associating one or more vendor identifiers with the first vendor name.

7. The method for organizing vendor information according to Claim 6, wherein the database was at least partially created in response to a database describing relationships between a plurality of vendor names.

8. The method for organizing vendor information according to Claim 6, wherein the database was created at least partially in response to relationships between vendors defined by a user of computer software associated with the database.

9. The method for organizing vendor information according to Claim 1 further comprising associating a plurality of vendor identifiers with a vendor group.

10. The method for organizing vendor information according to Claim 9, wherein the vendor group comprises a plurality of vendors with a common characteristic selected from the group consisting of an industry, a product, an ownership relationship, a strategic alliance, and a joint venture.

11. The method for organizing vendor information according to Claim 1 further comprising associating a third vendor identifier with ones of the accounts payable items indicating the relationship between the vendors associated with the first and second vendor identifiers.

12. A system for organizing vendor information comprising:

a computer readable storage medium;

software stored on the storage medium and operable

5 to:

receive data comprising a plurality of accounts payable items, each accounts payable item having an associated vendor name, the vendor name representing a business associated with a purchase transaction

10 represented by the accounts payable item, wherein ones of the accounts payable items are associated with a first vendor name; and

associate a first vendor identifier and a second vendor identifier using a computer with ones of

15 the accounts payable items associated with the first vendor name.

13. The system for organizing vendor information according to Claim 12, wherein the first vendor

20 identifier uniquely identifiers a single vendor associated with the first vendor name.

14. The system for organizing vendor information according to Claim 12, wherein the second vendor

25 identifier indicates a relationship between a vendor and the vendor with the first vendor name.

15. The system for organizing vendor information according to Claim 14, wherein the relationship is any of

30 a subsidiary relationship, a joint venture relationship, a partnership relationship or an ownership relationship.

16. The system for organizing vendor information according to Claim 12, wherein the first vendor identifier and second vendor identifier are associated with ones of the items in response to the first vendor

5   name.

17. The system for organizing vendor information according to Claim 16, wherein the software is further operable to maintain a database associating one or more

10   vendor identifiers with the first vendor name.

18. The system for organizing vendor information according to Claim 17, wherein the database was at least partially created in response to a database describing

15   relationships between a plurality of vendor names.

19. The system for organizing vendor information according to Claim 17, wherein the database was created at least partially in response to relationships between

20   vendors defined by a user of computer software associated with the database.

20. The system for organizing vendor information according to Claim 12, wherein the software is further

25   operable to associate a plurality of vendor identifiers with a vendor group.

21. The system for organizing vendor information according to Claim 20, wherein the vendor group comprises

30   a plurality of vendors with a common characteristic selected from the group consisting of an industry, a product, an ownership relationship, a strategic alliance, and a joint venture.

40

22. The system for organizing vendor information according to Claim 12, wherein the software is further operable to associate a third vendor identifier with ones of the accounts payable items indicating the relationship
5 between the vendors associated with the first and second vendor identifiers.